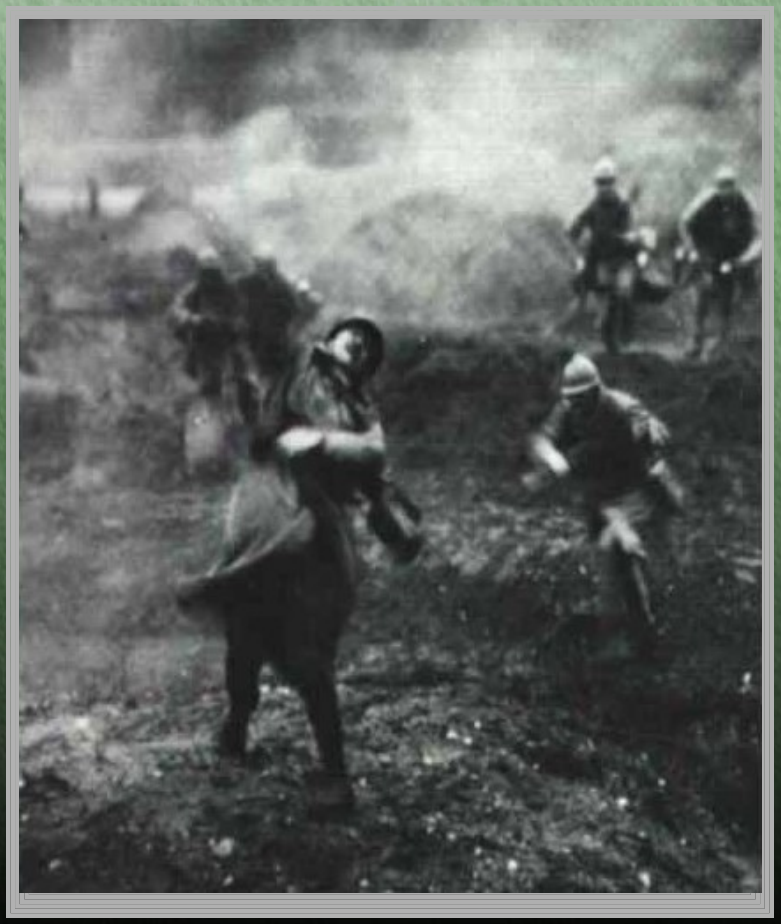
Combat Stress Control

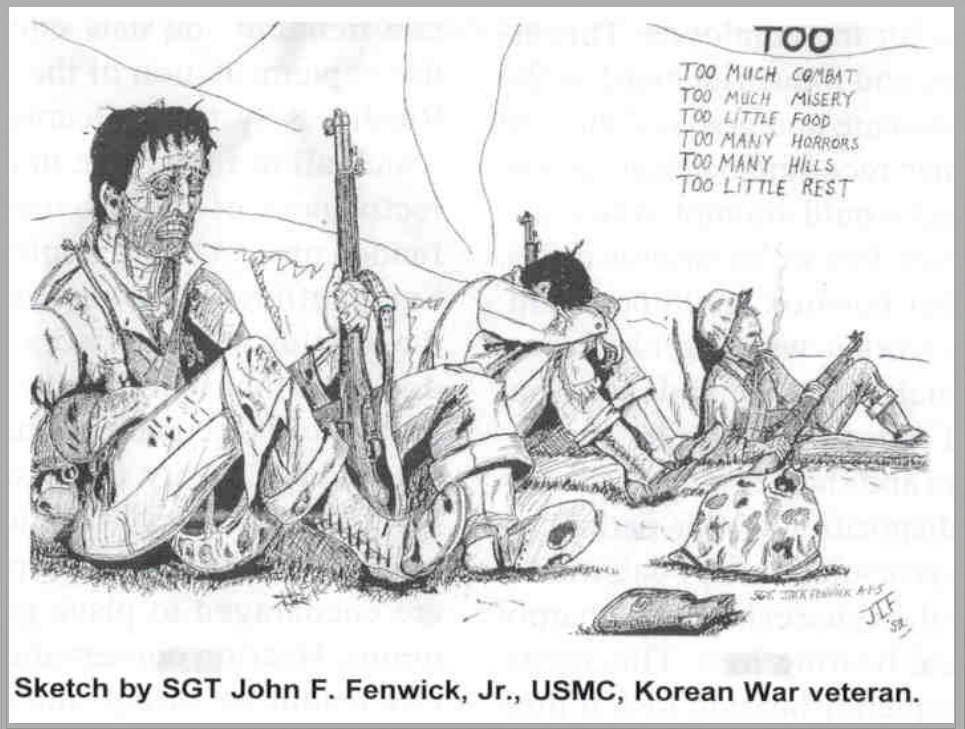
History of Combat Stress



Where there is combat…

There is stress.

What is Combat Stress ?



Sketch by SGT John F. Fenwick, Jr., USMC, Korean War veteran.

5 Stresses

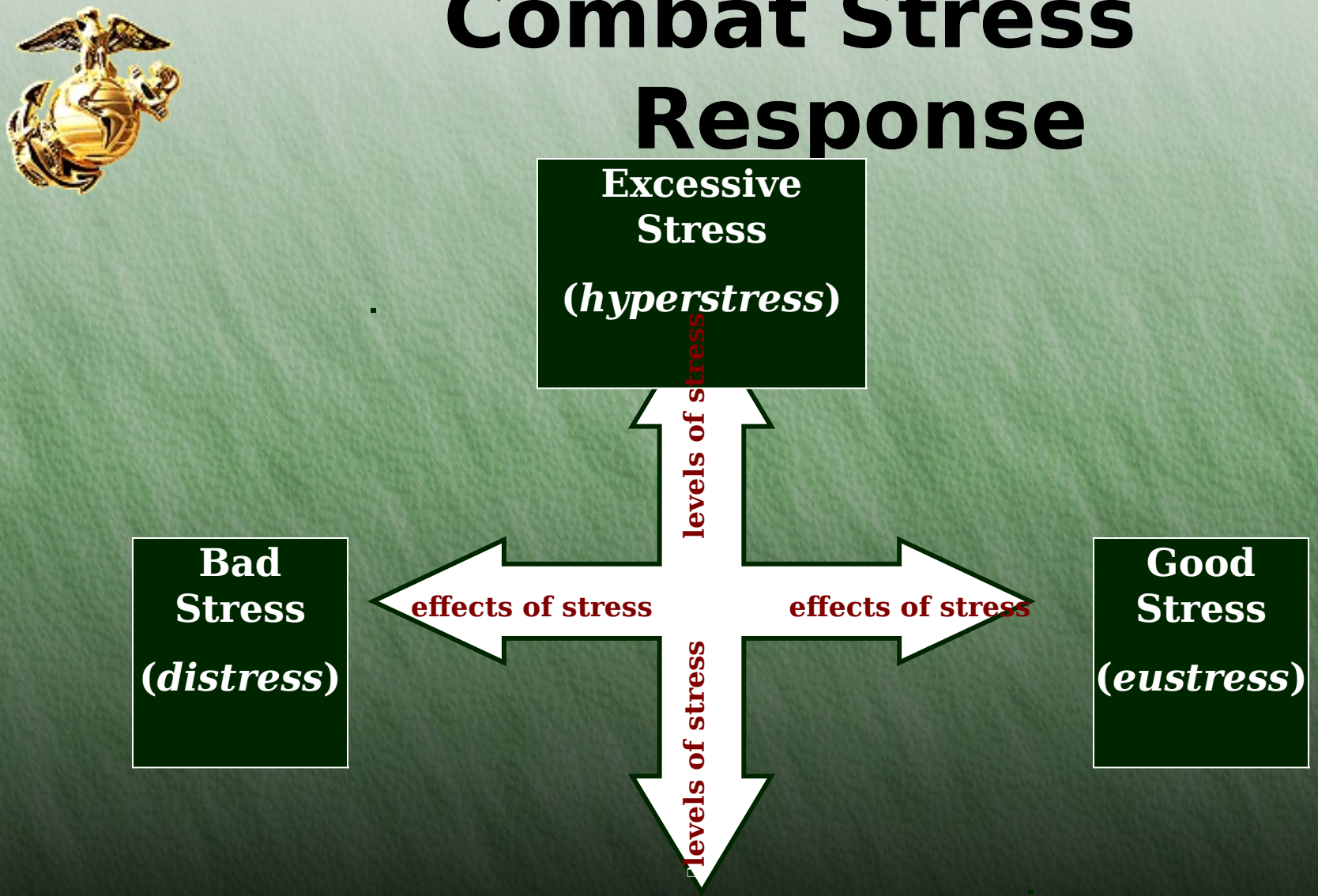
- Extreme risk and fear
- The “fog” of war
- Discomfort and fatigue
- Casualties
- Boredom

What is Combat Stress ?

9 Elements

- **Violent, unnerving sights and sounds**
- **Casualties**
- **Confusion and lack of information**
- **Feelings of isolation**
- **Communications breakdown**
- **Individual discomfort and physical fatigue**
- **Fear, stress and mental fatigue**
- **Continuous operations**
- **Homesickness**

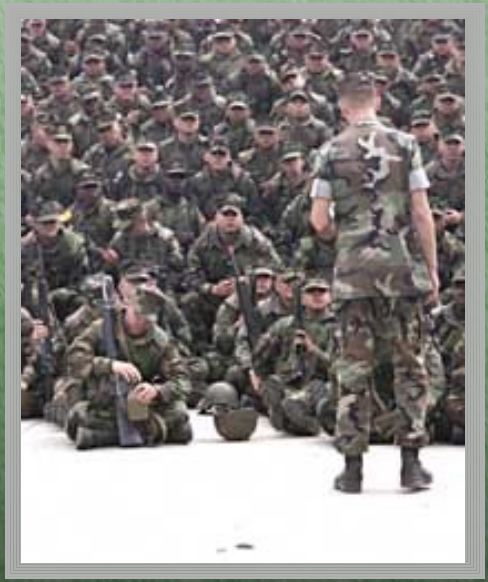
Combat Stress Response



Dysfunctional Stress Responses

- Muscles
- Sleep
- Stomach
- Cardiovascular
- Neurological
- Brain
- Behavior

Preventing Dysfunctional Combat Stress Responses



- **Effective Leadership**
- **Confidence and Morale**
- **Unit Cohesion**
- **Physical Conditioning & Realistic Training**
- **Family Care**
- **Stress Management Techniques**

Controlling the Combat Stress Response

BODY

- Hydration & Nourishment
- Dry off, cool off or warm up
- Wash up, shave, change clothes

MIND

- Think about succeeding
- Deep breaths, calm, in control
- Remember stress is normal

Controlling the Combat Stress Response

UNIT

- Talk, get facts, ignore rumors
- Welcome newcomers to the team
- Clean weapons, focus on mission

HONOR

- No alcohol or drug use
- Obey Rules of Engagement

Intervention

- Regardless of the best prevention and leadership efforts serious Dysfunctional Combat Stress Reactions may occur.
- When this happens, Marine leaders, Medical and Psychiatric personnel and Chaplains work to intervene with simple principles.

Principles of Intervention

- Proximity
  - Manage the service member as close to their unit as possible. Utilize maximum unit cohesion to promote recovery.
- Immediacy
  - Treat as soon as possible. Prevent mishaps and misconduct.
- Expectancy
  - Give positive expectations for full recovery and return to duty. Normalize reactions.
- Simplicity
  - Use brief, simple methods to restore physical well-being, and self-confidence. “3 hots and a cot.”

Conclusion

- Preserve Combat Power
- Stress is Normal
- Goal is Control
- Leadership Responsibility
- Brilliance in the Basics
- Use Support